

The Eclectic Theosophist

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SPEAKING OUT

"A Brave Declaration of Principles"

H. P. Blavatsky's concluding chapter of her *Key to Theosophy* opens with a question from an inquirer: "Tell me, what do you expect for Theosophy in the future?" To this she replies: "If you speak of THEOSOPHY, I answer that, as it has existed throughout the endless cycles upon cycles of the Past, so it will ever exist throughout the infinitudes of the Future, because Theosophy is synonymous with EVERLASTING TRUTH."

In the light of these words, anyone who calls himself a Theosophist has a grave responsibility. To be sure, if he is endowed with a modicum of common sense, he will not claim to be the possessor of Everlasting Truth; but he will accept the fact of the eternal and all-encompassing nature of Theosophy and thus will acknowledge that the principles he studies spring from an authentic source. This is fundamental to his belief—or should be; and it should influence the manner in which he approaches all his studies therein.

The founding of the modern Theosophical Movement has a special objective. The time was ripe for clearly stating certain fundamental doctrines of the ancient Tradition which for untold centuries had, at least in the West, been veiled under the guise of myths, allegories and symbols, or had been studied in secret societies, pre-eminently in the mystery schools of classical times, schools whose true nature modern scholarship has never fathomed. The externalizing of certain of these Universal Ideas was an attempt to spread them broadcast in order that they might stem the rush of western civilization on the one hand into inordinate materialism and, on the other, into phychic superstition and experimentation.

All this is of course well known to students of our standard literature where the *factual* nature of these Universal Ideas is made abundantly clear, and where it is also averred that they have the power to halt the dangerous extremes into which our civilization is drifting *provided their dissemination can be successfully accomplished*.

These facts are reviewed here for the purpose of discussing to what extent this theosophical objective still holds. We believe that it is as valid today as it was a century ago, perhaps more so. We do indeed perceive many instances where these Great Ideas have touched with their supernal light some superior minds of the present day; and we welcome the opportunity to give recognition to theosophic truth *wherever* it may be found. Yet, as we look about us, we are aware of the alarming proliferation of strange cults, experimental centers of pseudo-occultism, and fantastic distortions of sound doctrine. The thought atmosphere of today is a swirling melange of the counterfeit and the real. This

condition appears to be precipitating the very onrush along destructive paths that Theosophy was meant to stem. Some, it is true, consider the confusion of ideas a healthy sign. It may be so, just as a fever is nature's way of burning out a poison in the system; but a good doctor knows that a fever if allowed to run too high can kill.

Is it, then, the time to abandon the effort so wisely inaugurated a century ago, to forsake it midway in its cleansing and regenerating influence? We think not, and we ask: Is it not rather our duty as Theosophists to speak out boldly, enunciating in clear and unmistakable terms those fundamental principles of ageless Truth which were meant to guide and teach this creatively active but undisciplined age?

There are evidently those who do not feel this urgency, who believe that it is not the time to "speak out boldly." To exhibit in official publications an interest in high-minded endeavors of an historic, scientific or cultural nature, with commendable ethical overtones, is all very well; but must this preclude a bringing together of all such worthy material under the banner of Theosophy? Has the very word theosophy become so suspect that it must be by-passed or relegated to inconspicuous and casual reference?

We cannot fail also to note here and there, a tendency to water down a teaching. Is this done in order to make it more palatable—offering a sort of philosophical placebo? Rather, cannot a teaching be offered, *sometimes*, carrying its own potent challenge? This tendency in some quarters to "play down" a teaching is accentuated in cases where a striking concept introduced is so obviously straight from the Source that one would applaud—except that it is given as a merely random thought: "May it not be that . . . ?"

Now the oblique approach has its uses. It is a valuable technique in guiding wavering minds. But surely it can be overdone as a consistent editorial policy. Why choose to ignore the source? Why should not H. P. Blavatsky and others be named and given credit for statements which obviously mark them as speaking with authority, as advanced students if you like, who have been trained and pass on what they have learned, following the age-old tradition: *Iti maya srutam*, "Thus have I heard"?

Perhaps this choosing to ignore the source of an idea is an unconscious bowing to the prevalent psychological quirk: that in philosophical areas speculation is acceptable, whereas a statement uttered as "fact" is not considered valid. Note how the innumerable philosophical systems are studied earnestly in the halls of learning, supposedly because each proponent offers *his own ideas*. Yet H.P.B., for instance, because she claimed nothing as her own, but said: "I bring a portion of the Truth from Those who have taught me," is considered suspect and

ignored by scholars who, it seems, deny even the possibility of the existence of a verifiable body of teaching about man and the universe. They consider suitable for study the thinking of other men and acknowledge as fact only the dictums of science. Surely Theosophists should take another stand; surely they recognize and give credence to passages such as the following from *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* (Letter No. VI): "The truths and mysteries of occultism constitute, indeed, a body of the highest spiritual importance, at once profound and practical for the world at large. Yet it is not as a mere addition to the tangled mass of theory or speculation in the world of science that they are given to you, but for their practical bearing on the interests of mankind."

The above discussion leads us to a final thought which should be, we believe, subject for daily examination by all Theosophists. It has to do with the often perplexing problem of how to be effective promulgators of Theosophy. Each student has the right to his own way of thinking and his own methods of expressing his thoughts; at the same time he has the responsibility of keeping the doctrine pure. Question: How to practice complete freedom of thought without wandering off into inconsequential and irrelevant side-issues; and on the other hand, how to maintain "a brave declaration of principle" without becoming authoritarian and dogmatic in utterance?

We must think for ourselves, recognizing at the same time that our thought is inevitably stamped with our own bias and limitations. But we strengthen our powers of perception by our own efforts, by using our minds and endeavoring to develop our intuition. This last, the developing of intuition, requires discipline, without which no freedom is worth the candle. It is the theosophical teachings which provide a basis for discipline: By approaching them with reverence and devotion, we find that they can have a marked effect upon our wayward minds. If we do our part they exert a powerful influence in clarifying and refining our thought processes. It is not a miracle that they can do this: they are more than a body of exalted teaching; they reflect light from "the Universal Spiritual Essence of Nature" which is the source of all Truth.

In this spirit, then, let us keep the theosophical banner flying as a symbol of what we stand for, as a daily reminder that if we study, write and speak with the modesty born of recognition of our limitations, combined with the conviction which springs from our faith in the power of the Teachings, our work will carry "that vitality which living truth alone can impart"—again, the words of H. P. Blavatsky.—H.T.

DRUGS AND THE EFFECT ON THE SOUL

The following article by Lilo Linne first appeared in the German magazine *Der Theosophische Pfad*, January-February 1971. Dr. Hugo Styff made a report of it for the Swedish newspaper, *Nordvärsta Skanes Tidningar* of Helsingborg, February 19, 1971, and he has kindly translated his report into English for *The Eclectic Theosophist*.—Eds.

When Apollonius of Tyana said that wine clouds the clear ether of the soul, he pointed to one of the obstacles

to cultural development. Stimulants of all kinds merely mask that sense of weariness which acts as a guard warning us when our thoughts and feelings go astray. What one needs is rest and tranquility in order to gather one's strength and carry on. A stimulant does not give the soul new energy; it only irritates and stupefies it. Today a host of "stimulantia" have swept over and invaded us: the Bacchus orgies of antiquity and the "tobacco colleges" of Frederick II of Prussia are succeeded by the nearly ineradicable abuse of narcotics.

Last autumn, Walter Buhler, M.D., of Hagen in Westphalia, Germany, lectured on the influence of narcotics on soul-life. He gave shocking statistics showing in how short a time the desire for drugs has spread in so rich and progressive a country as the USA. Thousands of young people of all classes have succumbed to the epidemic, and still more thousands continue to be seduced. Many of them are no longer able to return to a normal life; they can no longer handle problems of reality; they fall ill, break down and are lost. Every year some 650 persons die from such intoxication. In other countries, for instance Germany and Sweden, even higher figures are quoted. More and more plunge recklessly to their ruin, seduced by irresponsible and greedy individuals. What drives young people into this abyss?

Extremely old are man's efforts to penetrate the sphere of consciousness, to become free from the earthly bonds of the body and enter higher planes. Few succeed—only those chosen ones who, through sublime spiritual striving, are prepared to practice self-denial and abstinence. Such are the Masters of the Asiatic religions and of the Ancient Wisdom who as Teachers have sought to help their fellowmen and take them along on their upward flight.

The Mystery Schools of antiquity with their initiations were eloquent examples thereof. They gave out deep esoteric knowledge, but at the cost of enormous labor. However, there existed among those teachers certain irresponsible ones who were rash enough to support their endeavors with drugs and poisons in order to give the illusion to their disciples of hastening their flight to the heights. But it is only an illusory push into the superconscious that drugs give; in actuality the mind is brought into a state of trance. By means of his mental powers, from previously received fragmented stimuli, the disciple pieces together completely new pictures which impress him as supercelestial and entirely new. Then people talk of wonderful scenes, preternaturally beautiful colors and fantastic forms. Here lies the great mistake.

Impulsion into spiritual realms can never occur artificially by means of drugs. It can be effected only through selfless spiritual labor, by meditation and prayer. That must be understood. On the other hand, when a people gives itself up to the pursuit of sensual pleasures, which is very easy to do in a welfare state such as the USA (as also in our country) then that people is doomed.

An historical retrospect distressingly confirms this; for the use of narcotics has always been a sign of decadence, indicating that a people has passed its cultural summit. The drift into artificial conditions of intoxication

was the downfall of the once brilliant civilization of Egypt and the sublime Asiatic cultures. They degenerated owing to the consumption of opiates, causing the terrible misery of the opium dens. In the sacred places of Greece, in Asia Minor and in Colchis, a drug prepared from *Colchicum autumnale* (meadow saffron) was known and used. Thus Greece sank into insignificance.

A grave responsibility rests with all those who have realized this great danger. The only thing they can do now is: To continuously work towards making the world, and especially the vulnerable young people, attentive to the danger; to set forth spiritual goals and ideals; to activate the higher forces which, because of his divine origin, exist in every man; and to call attention to the founders of the great religions. If this does not succeed we, too, are doomed.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Does not the use of the words "Point Loma" in the title of your new corporation limit or tend to circumscribe the very object you seem to be working towards?

A. No, we do not think this indicates a parochialism in aim and work. May we also point, parenthetically, to what is of historical record, that the energies pouring through the T.S. with Headquarters formerly at Point Loma were marked by a *universal outlook* the very opposite of a narrow parochialism. On the other hand we do not nurse a chauvinistic attitude blind to imperfections and inadequacies, past or present. But the good—in intent and design as well as in accomplishment—must be preserved, protected and, when it comes to universal teaching, promulgated. That is our viewpoint: that the horizon of our thought and attitude must be eclectic in ways or methods, universal in teaching, understanding in appreciation of the aspirations and efforts of other Theosophical groups and Societies dedicated to high purpose. But we must also be firm in the conviction that misconception and even corruption of teaching, diverting us from that clear body of truth expressed so grandly by H.P.B., must be faced honestly, frankly, and cast out if the inner life of the Theosophical Movement, in its several branches, is to become an increasing factor of high enlightenment and ennobling and practical direction in the world.—W.E.S.

Q. Is there a radical difference between the scientific and the theosophical meaning given to the word "evolution"?

A. Yes, there is. It stems basically from a difference in orientation; but the divergence grows, just as the distance between the arms of an angle increase as the length of the arms increases. Scientific evolution is earth-oriented; while for the Theosophist, evolution is a universal process.

The scientific theory is, briefly, that somehow life began from "a turmoil of inanimate matter." Somehow organic molecules appeared and joined to form cells; and from ever more complex cell aggregates, over immense periods of time the various species of plants and animals "evolved" through many stages of modification and adaptation. Man, with his astonishing brain, is con-

sidered a relatively recent appearance in the animal kingdom. How this all comes about is considered largely a matter of mechanical and biochemical processes.

From the theosophical point of view, the Universe is *Life* expressing itself in multifarious lives everywhere, each such life a spark of the Central Flame. The spark has been given many names: in English it may be called spirit, soul or essence—at the moment the name doesn't matter. These essences throughout the universe, not just on earth, seek ever fitter vehicles for expressing what is within themselves; they are pressing forward towards a full development of their potentialities. The essence, in every case great or small, builds the body it requires at each stage of its forward journey; and through cyclic time it builds a new type of body when a former one has outrun its usefulness.

Evolution in this sense is only secondarily a study of body building, however interesting that branch of the subject can be. As the etymology of the word implies, it is an unrolling or unfolding from within itself what lies latent therein. And what are these powers? They are the inexhaustible powers *inherent in the universe*. Just this one thought, if held as a provisional hypothesis by scientists, would do away with some of the complexities they have compounded in a subject already very complex.

Moreover, this one thought could give meaning and purpose to the life of man and a vision of what his future could be, as there grew within him an awareness of the unity that exists through nature, since he would not set himself against the universe in existential loneliness. All lives are following the same pathway toward enlightenment.—H.T.

BOOK REVIEW

The Mathematics of the Cosmic Mind. A Study in Mathematical Symbolism. By L. Gordon Plummer, The Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, Illinois. Indexed, Pp 215. \$10.00.

Goethe who, like Spinoza, rejected the materialism of modern science, once said to his friend Schiller: "There ought to be some other way of grasping nature... as active and living." The author of this work has a synoptic vision of nature as active and living. He would agree with Spinoza that it is a realm that exact thought and a mathematical approach is most fitted to understand. This most exceptional work gives us a mathematically oriented cosmology related to ancient Hindu and Theosophical teachings. This fills a need, for at present cosmology, like philosophical Idealism, is neglected in Anglo-American philosophical circles. We have lost sight of man's cosmic status. Noting this, the late W. E. Hocking sought to outline the horizons of a world philosophy which like Theosophy could bridge the gulf between East and West. Materialism sugar-coated as Naturalism has worked against any unifying spiritual view of man.

Gordon Plummer, who needs no introduction to Theosophical readers, takes his starting point in mathematical considerations, and his fascinating geometrical studies are profusely illustrated with diagrams and charts. It seems he would suggest Dantesquely to novice

and chela alike: "Let no one ignorant of Geometry enter here." His very readable style carries the non-mathematical reader over difficulties into a genuinely able presentation of the essential principles of Theosophy. He stays close to those tenets laid down by H. P. Blavatsky in her famous work *The Secret Doctrine*, giving us indeed an introduction to that work, and a valuable guide also to Sanskrit terminology, those frequently used terms sometimes baffling to the general reader.

All students of Theosophy will welcome this attractively bound volume and the light it throws on basic teachings of Theosophy. It is a book one puts down with the feeling "this study will lead ever on to new and richer understanding."—Bernard Mollenhauer, F.I.A.L. (Swiss)

MIND OF THE TIME is a recently started newsletter issued by the United Lodge of Theosophists, Ottawa, Canada. The following is quoted from its second issue (Vol. 1, No. 2, April 1971):

"HOW MANY LIFETIMES." Hollywood's Oscars are not the only emblems of contemporary cinematic excellence. Major awards are also made to "Sponsored Films," i.e., short movies, without stars, ordered by businesses, government bodies and others for various purposes. *How Many Lifetimes* is a 27-minute, 16mm color film sponsored by The Theosophical Society in America, Wheaton, Illinois. It underlines the brotherhood of all mankind and suggests *Reincarnation*. This film was chosen as one of the U.S.A.'s 50 best sponsored films for 1971, selected from about 15,000 other films. — *Milwaukee Journal*, Feb. 7, 1970

FROM LETTERS RECEIVED

Mrs. Erica Lauber, Pres. Blavatsky Lodge, London Eng.-land:—I've carefully read your first copy of *The Eclectic Theosophist* . . . Every single contribution was very well worth it and extremely interesting. H.P.B.'s "What Are the Theosophists?" expresses in one of the most succinct paragraphs I know of what our Movement is, or rather the attitude we might adopt towards one another . . . Perhaps my most pressing preoccupation just now is to find a way towards an ever-deepening understanding of UNITY (not unification) of the Theosophical Movement's many Sections in the world, a sitting loosely to our own way of expressing the Age-Old fundamentals such as we can understand or make our own. Wouldn't this pave the way towards a more intuitive approach to ALL expressions in thought or deed? I am concerned in particular because I come across the, to me, artificial barriers of: "I belong to the Adyar, Pt. Loma, Canadian, Indian, German, etc., etc. Section of the T.S., and all that that implies in the mind of the other! Looking ahead to the next decade(s) this is a waste of time, surely. So I hope, if I may be allowed to say so, that your new publication will emphasize that which lies behind, beyond, within the Masters' messages received through H.P.B. and not the growing pains of the various Sections or their differences, except in so far as it might help to understand their unity?

"There is another side to this: how could the various Sections and individuals, too, of the Movement become more aware of the quest and the work of one another? The last year or so has seen some breaking down of barriers in this field, but much more could be achieved perhaps . . .

"Altogether, what ARE our priorities, I wonder? Maybe you can voice some guidelines in one of your next copies? . . ."

(Readers are invited to respond to the earnest questions in this letter.—Eds.)

"Madame Blavatsky Defended"

" . . . a fine carefully-worked document, interesting as well as informative. It is the one good thing to emerge from the Blavatsky 'smear cycle.'—G. C. LeGros, Joplin, Mo.

"I found myself reading the whole of *Madame Blavatsky Defended* in one sitting! You can be sure this book will be a lasting example to future generations of Theosophists, exemplifying the kind of vigilant, dedicated defense which every Theosophist with a sense of gratitude owes to his Great Teacher!" W. A. Carrithers, Jr., Sec. "The Blavatsky Foundation," Fresno, California

(Telegram): "Just received your *Madame Blavatsky Defended*. It is a sturdy bow in the hands of truth lovers."—Evangelino Farrell, Butler, N.J.

"You have presented an eloquent contrast between the flippant if not always vicious misrepresentations by some members of the news media, and the sincere and high-minded words of those who knew H.P.B. personally or who have studied her writings and have testified to having had their lives transformed thereby; and any reader who functions with any degree of higher intelligence will surely want to go immediately to original sources and do some studying and reflection on his own account."—S.H.W., San Francisco, Cal.

" . . . A bugle call to unite. Many good Theosophists who have slept and were placid have heard this call to arms . . . and we SHALL unite and stand together."—Edith Kerley, Desert Hot Springs, Calif.

"I have read your *Blavatsky Defended* and commend you on an excellent compilation of eloquent protests and magnificent and touching tributes to a truly remarkable woman . . ."—James Hitchcock, M.D., Greenville, N.J.

Appreciation for New Book

Words of commendation of the new book *Theosophy Under Fire*, by Iverson L. Harris, have reached this office. From Emmett A. Greenwalt, Professor of History, Los Angeles State College: "This book is an amazing document in its clarity and detail; a most unusual contribution to history. Surely it is providential that out of a legal reverse should come this testimony so many years later."

Professor Greenwalt is the author of *The Point Loma Community in California, 1897-1942*, published by the University of California (1955).

From Lawrence E. Gordon, Editor of *The Listener Program* of San Diego and owner of the Gordon Broadcasting Company: "Read with enthusiasm; more like a Platonic dialogue than I would have thought possible."—State Wide News

ENCYCLOPEDIC THEOSOPHICAL GLOSSARY

We are happy to hear from Lawrence Merkel of Theosophical University Press (Pasadena, California), that their projected program includes publication of Dr. de Purucker's "Encyclopedic Theosophical Glossary." This is a project long overdue, and we feel Theosophical students around the world will welcome the news with interest and await publication with keen anticipation. We shall keep you informed.

Announcing July 11th publication of

WIND OF THE SPIRIT

by G. de Purucker

Paperback, 282 pp — \$3.25 To Dealers — \$2.25
Order from Point Loma Publications, Inc.

TO OUR READERS

It has been a pleasure to send you the first three issues of *THE ECLECTIC THEOSOPHIST*, and we plan to continue this distribution to those who are interested. We would therefore appreciate your indicating on the enclosed Notice your wishes in this regard.